meeting, would also be referred to the Standing Committee for their consideration and report to the Council.

10. The Standing Committee may, if necessary, invite experts and persons eminent in specific fields to have the benefit to their views while deliberating upon the related subjects.

11. After the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts, decentralization of resoruces, powers and responsibilities to Urban and Rural Panchayat Raj institutions have become very important. The Council recommends adequate devolution in this respect from the States to Local bodies.

12. Regional Development boards and other regional development arrangements within the State require to be fully strengthened wherever necessary and made operational with full delegation of financial and executive powers. The State Governments would be fully involved in making these arrangements and in the exercise of powers under article 271 of the Constitution.

Sick Textile Mills in the Country

577. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the number of textile mills alongwith names which have become sick at present in the country.

(b) the total number of workers in these mills; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to solve the problems being faced by these mills and workers?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) and (b) As on 31.10.96, 299 textile mills were registered with Board for industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) the number of these workers is 3,75,084. A Statement showing the names of the mills, along with the number of workers is given as Annexure. *[See Appendix 179, Annexure No. 14],*

(c) Government has set up BIFR to enquire into the working of sick industrial companies and to prepare and sanction, as appropriate, schemes for revivial of mills.

Deployment of Security Personnel for Miss World Contest at Bangalore

578. SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of personnel from the Border Security Force, National Security Guards and Rapid Action Force that were deployed to ensure law and order during the Miss World Beauty Pageant recently organised by a private company at Bangalore;

(b) the total cost to the national exchequer on account of such deployment; and

(c) whether arrangements have been made to recover the amount?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (c) On the request of the Government of Kamataka, 5 coys of RAF, 2 Coys of Mahila CRPF and platioon strength of BSF were made available to Government of Karnataka in connection with arrangements for Miss World Beauty pageant. However, 2 -platoons strength of BSF has been withdrawn with effect from 13.11.96. The cost of deployment will depend upon the period of deployment and the charges will be recovered from the Government of Kamataka as per the prescribed rates.

Involvement- of Foreign Intelligence Agencies in Extremist Activities

579. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware, of the involvement of ISI and other foreign intelligence agencies to step up the extremist activities in the country

specially in Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern Region;

(b) if so, the steps taken to minimise their operations;

(c) whether it is a fact that the base camps of these agencies are located across the border; and

(d) if so, the methods adopted to combat the menace?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (d) Government is aware of the involvement of Pak ISI in continuing its efforts to promote extremist activities in the country particularly in Jammu & Kashmir and North-Eastern Region. Government is also aware of the fact that base camps are located across the border.

Government is alive to the situation and is taking all necessary steps to combat and frustrate the designs of Pak ISI.

DOT tender to companies for Optical Fibre Cable

580. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Department of Telecommunication's tender to procure optical fibre cables was shelved and instead, certain companies were selected for the purpose; and

(b) the reason for scraping the tender in favour of the above companies?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) and (b) A tender for procurement of Optical Fibre Cables, which was issued on 22nd March, 1996 as scheduled was opened on 21.5.96. The tender was issued for procurement of 21,000 KMs of Optical Fibre Cables. The Tender was subsequently cancelled because of formation of cartelisation among the bidders.

To meet immediate requirements orders were placed on two PSU's namely M/s Optel for 2800 KMs & on M/HCL for 1200 KMs.

Subsequently limited Tenders were invited from eligile bidders as below:—

(i) 1100 Kms of 6 Fibres, Tender opened on 23.10.96

(ii) 6075 Kms of Fiber, Tender opened on 17.10.96

(iii) 820 Kms of Fiber, Tender opened on 24.10.96

The tenders are presently under examination.

Approved rate for Faxing

581. SHRI JOY NADUKKARA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any rate of charges for faxing matters from the booths of the Department has been fixed;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor,

(c) whether it is a fact that some of the booth operators are charging exorbitant rates; and

(d) if so, the action Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VERMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) No Sir. In the booths run by the Department, only precribed rates are charged.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Telephones Out of Order in Vikas Puri under Jank Puri Exchange

582. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of areas where telephones in Vikas Puri under Janak Puri exchange remained out of order for